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REVIEWS

Las Guerras de Bolívar. Primera guerra, 1812-1814. Formación del alma venezolana, by Francisco Rivas Vicuña, enviado extraordinario y ministro plenipotenciario de Chile. Editorial "Victoria," Caracas, Venezuela, 1921. XVIII+389.

Simón Bolívar, the Liberator, the greatest figure of the Spanish-American revolution, has been the subject of many books and essays. Many of them, however, are couched in such laudatory terms that they leave the reader uncertain of the truth. Of late years more sources of information have become available, including the correspondence of Bolívar recently published by R. Blanco Fombona. And now comes Sr. Francisco Rivas Vicuña, Chilean minister to Venezuela, with the first volume of a more critical account of Bolívar's activities. Though the title suggests a military study of his campaigns, the subtitle, *Formación del alma venezolana*, indicates the importance of the period to be the growth of a nationalist feeling.

The volume begins with a pen picture of Bolívar on board of the schooner, Jesús María y José, a fugitive from the collapse of Miranda's attempt to free Venezuela from Spanish control. Bolívar found refuge in the Dutch island of Curaçao. But he did not long remain there. The revolutionary junta in New Granada, having its seat in Cartagena, attracted his attention and within three months of his departure from La Guaira, he was in Cartagena offering his services. As a colonel he was entrusted with a small detachment of soldiers, which grew more numerous with local successes. The Congress of New Granada promoted Bolívar to be a brigadier-general. With his enlarged command, amounting to less than 1000 men, he marched on the Spanish troops, threatening the frontier between New Granada and Venezuela, crossing rivers and climbing the Venezuelan Andes. Again his success was complete. Disregarding the orders of superior officers, he extended his operations farther into his own country. The Spanish generals sought to prevent the spread of insurrectionary spirit by cruel and needless executions of prisoners and suspected civilians. Bolívar, in retaliation, declared a war without quarter. This is the most censured act of his career, which historians condemn or justify, according to their personal views.

Rivas Vicuña writes: "Paso más grave no ha sido dado jamás por general alguno y confesamos que se requiere la mayor serenidad de espíritu para juzgar este documento que no sería sino el cartel de desafío de un hombre fuera del orden social, si no hubiera sido dictado por la necesidad de asegurar los elementos para la independencia de una nación que era la llave de la emancipación de todas las colonias españolas. La guerra a muerte fué iniciada por los aventureros peninsulares que, en horas turbias para su patria, se habían adueñado de las colonias y buscaban tan sólo riquezas y ascensos."

Rivas Vicuña points out that the consequences of the war without quarter were on the one hand the depopulation of Venezuela to such an extent that it has never recovered and therefore lags behind other South American countries in progress (the Spanish general Boves gave orders to his force of half-breed llaneros to execute every white man taken prisoner); and, on the other hand,

such ruthless warfare aroused the spirit of resistance and the desire for independence among a population naturally indifferent to the revolution in the beginning. For her sacrifice, Venezuela deserves from the other South American republics the greatest gratitude. "Venezuela y los países vecinos del Mar de las Antillas habrían tenido la suerte de Cuba y Puerto Rico, retardando por un siglo su libertad, y la América Austral se habría desangrado en un esfuerzo de medio siglo de sacrificios. Al holocausto del pueblo venezolano deben las naciones meridionales las relativas facilidades de sus campañas y la guerra a muerte en Venezuela librólas de idénticas miserias, permitiéndoles salvar sus energías para su progreso."

Bolívar continued his triumphant march from the frontier "like a cyclone." He entered the capital, Caracas, on August 7, 1813. In his proclamations to the inhabitants he referred to his army as liberators. And the title of El Libertador de Venezuela was conferred on him by the cabildo of Caracas, October 14. In his reply of acceptance, Bolívar said: "Ustedes me aclaman Capitán General y Libertador de Venezuela; título más glorioso y satisfactorio para mí que el cetro de todos los imperios de la tierra pero ustedes deben considerar que el Congreso de la Nueva Granada, el Mariscal de Campo José Félix Ribas, el Coronel Atanasio Girardot, el Brigadier Rafael Urdaneta, el Comandante Elías y los demás oficiales y tropas son verdaderamente estos ilustres libertadores. Ellos, señores, y no yo, merecen las recompensas con que a nombre de los pueblos quieren premiar ustedes en mí servicios que éstos han hecho." And Bolívar thereupon created the Order of Liberators. It has been the fashion with historians to treat somewhat contemptuously the assumption by Bolívar of the title Liberator and to write ungenerously of his creation of the Order of Liberators. But Rivas Vicuña places the following construction on the whole affair: "Bolívar ciertamente, buscó un título para prestigiarse a los ojos de las multitudes y fué a pedirlo a la autoridad que más influencia había tenido en la formación de la primera Republica venezolana; si hay en esto un movimiento de vanidad es una simple cuestión de fuero interno, mas para juzgar al hombre público hay que considerar el alcance de semejante medida que era aconsejada por las necesidades de propaganda en los durísimos momentos en que la opinión se mostraba desafecta al régimen que sostenía Bolívar con un pequeño núcleo de compañeros esforzados."

The capture of Caracas had not been accompanied by the annihilation of the Spanish armies. These were able to reorganize in six different localities, and, moreover, the Spanish government was able in 1814, after the defeat of the French armies in the peninsula, to send reinforcements to Venezuela. The result was the ultimate defeat and dispersal of the patriot forces despite heroic battles. Bolívar retreated to New Granada, followed by a wholesale emigration of Venezuelans, who feared the Spanish soldiers. Bolívar arrived in Cartagena September 20, 1814, and reported to the Congress; which absolved him from all blame for the disaster. Rivas Vicuña's first volume terminates here. His second volume, announced with the title *Segunda Guerra, 1815-1921. Formación de la patria venezolana*, will be eagerly awaited.

To those who wish more information about Bolívar the following books in English can be recommended as fairly accurate and reasonably impartial:

F. Loraine Petre, *Simón Bolívar*, and Hiram Bingham, *The journal of an expedition across Venezuela and Colombia, 1906-07. An exploration of the route of Bolívar's celebrated march of 1819*. From the latter the reader obtains an excellent idea of the difficult nature of the country over which Bolívar conducted his campaigns, as well as the desolation wrought by the war in a region which was better settled and cultivated at the beginning of the nineteenth century than it is today.

La Política de los Estados Unidos en el Continente Americano, by Raul de Cárdenas. 284 pp. Sociedad editorial Cuba Contemporánea, La Habana, 1921.

Here is a book that it would be well for those to have who are interested in the relations of our country with our Spanish speaking neighbors. It will make clear why the name of the United States in some countries stands for aggression and imperialism of an undesirable sort. Written by a Cuban, it is more favorable to us than it would be if a Nicaraguan or a Dominican were the author. In fact, it gives the impression of being the work of a fair-minded man who is defending a friend and desiring to show to another friend that the acts of the first are not so bad as they appear.

The first part of the book is a review in 80 pages of the expansion of the United States from the days of the thirteen colonies to the present moment, much the same sort of thing as we have studied in our American history classes in school, but with greater emphasis on the imperialistic nature of the expansion. The author sees, however, nothing very noteworthy in the way of aggression until we took over and governed Puerto Rico and the Philippines which are inhabited by peoples who do not speak English.

The second part of the book, in about 100 pages, treats the Monroe Doctrine rather fully. The author does not agree with some of our own countrymen who, like Hiram Bingham, think the Monroe Doctrine is an outworn formula; and he attacks some of the notions about the nature of the doctrine which he finds erroneously held.

In the third and last hundred pages, Sr. Cárdenas discusses the activities of the United States in the countries bordering on the Caribbean Sea, the interventions in Cuba, Panamá, Santo Domingo, Haiti, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico. He has done a great service in putting together the facts in this form, giving the text of various proclamations made by officers representing the government of the United States. In his criticism of events, Sr. Cárdenas considers that our motive is primarily that of defense both of our territory and our commerce. In Cuba, he thinks, we have done well. As to Mexico, he thinks we are unlikely to attempt control because,—“por algo se ha dicho que el imperialismo se verifica por la línea de menor resistencia.”

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“Cada maestrillo tiene su librillo.”

Dos colegas, los Sres. Setién y Mercado, han escrito entre otras cosas en sus respectivos artículos que aparecen en el último número de HISPANIA, mayo, 1922, de lo inadecuado que resulta el tratamiento dado a lo que todos los autores